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27th Amendment rushed to Senate amid Opp outcry

• Bill proposes constitutional court, changes to high court judge appointments • Army chief to be recognised as chief of defence forces; office of CJCSC to be abolished • President to get lifetime immunity from arrest, criminal proceedings • Senate likely to pass bill today

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The government on Saturday tabled the much-debated 27th Amendment Bill in the Senate, triggering noisy protests from the opposition over the pace and scope of the proposed changes.

Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar introduced the 26-page bill — which will be called Constitution (Twenty-Seventh Amendment) Act, 2025, after its passage — just hours after its approval by the federal cabinet.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif presided over the cabinet meeting via video link from Baku, where he had travelled with Field Marshal Asim Munir to attend Azerbaijan's Victory Day ceremony.

The bill, referred by Senate Chairman Yousuf Raza Gilani to the upper house committee on law and justice with the direction to hold a joint meeting with its National Assembly counterpart, proposes the creation of a Federal Constitutional Court, changes to the appointment process for high court judges, a higher cap on provincial cabinets, and changes to the military leadership structure.

In an unusual move, the Senate was reconvened on Saturday and scheduled to meet at 11:30am, but proceedings were delayed by around half an hour while the cabinet's approval was awaited.

While the Senate was still in session, the law and justice committees of both houses held a joint in-camera meeting to consider the bill. The meeting was boycotted by JUI-F and PTI lawmakers.

In yet another rare move, the Senate will meet today (Sunday) at 3pm with a one-point agenda to "consider" the bill, demonstrating extraordinary haste to

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27th Amendment 'dethrones' SC, legal experts warn: Page 3

PTI alleges power grab behind latest tweaks: Page 3

Dangling sword: Editorial on Page 6

FAISALABAD: Saim Ayub plays a shot during the third and final one-day international between Pakistan and South Africa at the Iqbal Stadium on Saturday. Ayub hit a half century and spinner Abrar Ahmed took four wickets as Pakistan beat South Africa by seven wickets, taking the series 2-1. The left-handed opener smashed 11 boundaries and a six in his 70-ball 77 to steer Pakistan to the 144-run target in 25.1 overs after Abrar's 4-27 had routed the Proteas for 143 in 37.5 overs. Pakistan won the first match of the series by two wickets before South Africa bounced back with an eight-wicket win in the second ODI.—AFP Report on Page 20

One chief to rule all military services

Article 243 overhaul marks a leap towards military centralisation and consolidation of uniformed supremacy

By Baqir Sajjad Syed in Islamabad

ANALYSIS

THE proposed 27th Constitutional Amendment, which would overhaul Article 243 and recast Pakistan's military command hierarchy, is the most ambitious restructuring effort in decades and perhaps the most contentious as it collides with entrenched institutional cultures and the fragile equilibrium between civilian and military power.

Its implementation may prove far more difficult than its drafters imagine. The plan collides with entrenched institutional cultures, long-standing inter-service rivalries, and the delicate balance between civilian oversight and military autonomy that has, at least in theory, defined Pakistan's power structure since 1973.

At the heart of the bill lies the deceptively simple premise of modernising defence coordination by creating a Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and abolishing the office of the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC).

But in practice, the reform would elevate the army chief to a constitutionally enshrined position of supremacy — combining operational command with overarching control of all services.

For over four decades, the CJCSC has served as the symbolic head of the armed services, designed to ensure coordination among the Army, Navy, and Air Force.

In practice, the role remained largely ceremonial, with the army — for over two and a half decades — reluctant to rotate it to other branches.

The proposed amendment would dissolve the post entirely on Nov 27, 2025, coinciding with the retirement of the current CJCSC, Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, and make the chief of army staff concurrently the Chief of Defence Forces — placing all three services under his authority.

Former human rights minister and defence academic Dr Shireen Mazari highlights an ambiguity left unaddressed in the bill.

"With the end of the CJCSC position, would the joint chiefs of staff committee also be dissolved?" she asks.

If so, which forum would replace it for coordination among the three services though the CJCSC's ineffectiveness is well known.

The supporters of the legislation argue that the

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PM Shehbaz reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to peace

BAKU: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday reiterated that Pakistan, like its Azerbaijani and Turkish brothers, seeks peace — but made it clear that no one will ever be allowed to challenge the country's sovereignty or undermine its territorial integrity.

Addressing Azerbaijan's Victory Day parade, the prime minister said that Pakistan, Turkiye, and Azerbaijan were like three brothers whose hearts beat together. "Today, we stand shoulder to shoulder, celebrating this momentous occasion," he added.

"What a proud and scintillating sight it is to witness our valiant armed forces marching beside their Azerbaijani and Turkish brothers, as the skies come alive with the roar of the JF-17 Thunder jets — a resounding symbol of our enduring friendship, which has, Alhamdulillah

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ON OTHER PAGES

First industrial policy awaits IMF's nod

The government has presented the country's first National Industrial Policy to the cabinet for approval, outlining major constraints to industrial growth and proposing reforms to revitalise the manufacturing sector. However, the Ministry of Finance has asked the Ministry of Industries and Production to first seek the IMF's clearance for the incentives proposed under the new policy. **Page 9**

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ICON

COMMENT

Supreme no more

By Makhdoom Ali Khan

This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but with a whimper
— (The Hollow Men) T.S. Eliot

NEWSPAPER editors, at times, require writers to cobble up a short article on famous persons, in the throes of death, that can be used as an obituary when they cease to be. Institutions on the brink of extinction merit similar consideration.

This is not an essay on the impact of the 27th constitutional amendment bill on the judiciary. It is not even a comment. It is an obituary of the Supreme Court (SC) and the high courts that we once knew. If you have known a person or institution well and for long, such a piece is also not easy to write. Expression requires words. The bill has left us at a loss for words. Trying as it is, one must nevertheless soldier on.

One must begin with the high courts. Central to the authority of these highest provincial courts is their jurisdiction to check

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Pakistan, US seek stronger economic partnership

• Officials discuss 'economically entrenched strategic partnership' • Washington seeks to balance ties between Islamabad and Beijing

By Anwar Iqbal

WASHINGTON: Pakistan and the United States on Saturday reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries, with Islamabad's envoy describing it as an effort to build an "economically entrenched strategic partnership".

The development came as S. Paul Kapur — who assumed charge as the US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs on Oct 22 — met Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Rizwan Saeed Sheikh at the State Department for what was described as a cordial and forward-looking exchange.

Ambassador Sheikh said the two sides explored practical ways to translate recent high-level political resolve into concrete cooperation.

"We discussed the ways and means of translating the resolve — expressed at the leadership level — of developing Pakistan-US ties into an economically entrenched strategic partnership, through sustained engagement in multiple domains of mutual interest," he said in a post on social media platform X.

Meanwhile, Mr Kapur said it was a "pleasure" to meet the Pakistani envoy.

"We discussed ways to advance the US-Pakistan relationship and make our countries more prosperous and secure," he said in a post on X.

Mr Kapur's meeting with Ambassador Sheikh comes as Washington and Islamabad recalibrate their relations under US President Donald Trump's second administration.

After years of uneven engagement and recurring mistrust, both sides are now emphasising economic cooperation alongside traditional security ties.

In recent months, US officials have pointed to Pakistan's potential role in regional stability and its capacity to contribute to economic and energy initiatives in South and Central Asia. The Trump administration has also encouraged American firms to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan's infrastructure, minerals, and technology sectors.

For Islamabad, the new tone in Washington offers an opportunity to diversify its partnership with the US, while the Trump administration appears keen to reduce Pakistan's overreliance on China. Officials in both capitals say they want to anchor

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